

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 36, No. 8

Urbana, Illinois

May, 1949

Published every month except June, July, August, and September. Subscription price, \$2.00 per year; single copies, 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter October 29, 1941, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Communications may be addressed to C. W. Roberts, 204a Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois.

Five Little Magazines and How They Grew

By ELSIE F. FILIPPI
Calumet High School, Chicago

As a teacher who has been privileged to serve the Muse, let me state, first of all, that I firmly believe in the inalienable right of the ordinary person to self-expression in poetic form. There is no keener enjoyment which comes to man in this troubled world than the pursuit of the creative arts. With half the world in ruins, we need, more than ever, the lift and happiness that poetry can give. We need, also, its deep wisdom and its enduring faith in mankind. This living medium of expression must not be thrust aside or treated as a dead art in our schools. More youngsters are asking about it and demanding instruction. It is deplorable, I think, that of the many hundreds of colleges in America, comparatively few of them provide courses in poetic technique and only a few dozen colleges publish verse magazines. In our high schools the conditions are worse,—only a few weeks, here and there, in the curriculum are allowed for the teaching of versification, which should coincide with youthful power and sensitiveness.

Two years ago, I was happy to learn that the new curriculum for English II (advanced freshmen), as worked out by Dr. Bell's committee, included, in addition to composition, grammar, one-act plays, short stories, and *Julius Caesar*, a four-week unit on "Song and Story" with an introduction to versification.

Because one of my teachers, Miss Margaret Taylor, had taught me the fundamentals of versification at Fenger High School and had greatly encouraged me in writing, thereby bringing me happiness and success in later years, I was eager to try to transmit her inspiration to my students. Not that I expected to make poets of any of them, for poets are born,—then made. I hoped only to enrich my students' understanding and delight in literature and to improve their writing in all forms. It is inevitable, I believe, that verse-writing must influence one's writing of prose.

Prose has little to give to the poet except the skeleton of grammar, but prose can borrow color, music, and magic from poetry. Besides, poetry sharpens the senses and disciplines the craftsmanship, so that the versifier who turns to prose writing has a distinct advantage over the writer who has never attempted to ride Pegasus.

I have often been asked, "How do you teach children to write verse?" To break down any barriers of dislike for poetry is the first problem. Children are encouraged to talk about the poems they like, to recite or read them to the class and explain why they like them. We read poems together and in groups. We act out ballads or use pantomime in "Edward, Edward," "Johnny Armstrong," "Lord Randal," and others; often one group dramatizes a ballad or gives the action in pantomime while another reads it. Soon, I note, children rediscover that poetry is *fun*.

To eliminate the idea held by many boys that poetry is "effeminate," we discover that the great poets have been anything but weak or unmanly persons. They were exceedingly busy and capable persons who were constantly asked to perform unusual tasks: Chaucer was a soldier, a courtier, an office-holder, a diplomatic agent, and a business man, as well as the "Father of English Poetry." Shakespeare, besides being the greatest literary genius the world has ever known, was a landowner, a theatrical manager, an actor, and a playwright. Milton was a political pamphleteer and a secretary of foreign affairs. Tennyson, composer of some of the loveliest lyrics in our language, certainly did not have a delicate physique. We are told that his strength was so great that he could hurl a crowbar farther than any farmer in the village; it is said he could bend horseshoes; and once, when a pony injured itself, he picked it up and carried it in his arms. William Morris was a tremendously busy worker; he was a painter, a designer of tapestries, an architect, a manufacturer of furniture (the Morris chair was named after him), a typographer, a pioneer in illustrated books—he founded the Kelmscott Press—and a superb craftsman in many fields besides being a poet. Carl Sandburg worked as a harvest hand, a dishwasher, a truck-handler, and a milk-wagon driver.

The next step in teaching verse-writing, I found, was to note choice of words, clichés, imagery, alliteration and assonance, and to study figures of speech (simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, and apostrophe). I agree with Robert Frost, who declared, "I would be willing to throw away everything else for

metaphor; I do not think anybody ever knows the use of metaphor unless he has been properly educated in poetry." Children love to find figures of speech in old and new poems and in all their current reading.

Finally, we studied the metrics of verse, for by this time the class was eager to know how a poem is made and a few were anxious to try writing poems themselves.

How to go about an assignment in the writing of verse was the next problem. With considerable trepidation I assigned the writing of a poem of any length and meter and on any subject. Because I feared the assignment might be fearsome and tedious for some of the students, I made it clear that "D's" (failing grades) would be given only for *refusal to try*.

Imagine my delight, however, upon discovering a score of excellent poems in the first assignment and numerous verses that revealed promise. Then, in the words of my students,—“Miss Filippi had another ‘brain storm’,” for early the next morning I visited Mr. Worst, our principal, told him of our good fortune, and requested that we might be permitted to publish a little magazine in order to give our writers the joy of seeing their works in print. Our school print shop was recruited to do the printing. Thus, *Voices, an Adventure in Versecraft*, came into being. The title, by the way, was chosen because of its alliteration and assonance.

In April, 1946, our first magazine made its debut in the school colors, blue and maroon. Jean Huntington's editorial expressed our hopes:

Bobbing up as unpretentiously as this, we can but hope that you will wish us luck. Then, if the Parnassian gods favor us, one of these days we may put Calumet High School on the map in the world of poetry. So far, we have had only ten lessons in the rudiments of versecraft and these verses are the result of the first assignment in the writing of a poem; yet, having experienced ourselves “the pangs of a poetic birth,” we can at least more truly appreciate the art.

They best can judge the poet's worth
Who of themselves have known
The pangs of a poetic birth
By labours of their own.

So wrote William Cowper many years ago, and so feel we, humble beginners.

With the publication of these first poems, many more fine verses were pouring in although we were no longer studying versifica-

tion. It was fun to note the attitude toward Shakespeare's blank verse in *Julius Caesar* and the interest in figures of speech and choice of words evidenced in every phase of the curriculum. No longer was it a problem to persuade children to use the dictionary. Since they had used it and Roget's *Thesaurus* frequently to find the "inevitable" word for an original poem, they were word-conscious and eager to expand their knowledge of word-connotations. Of punctuation, too, they became keenly aware, for did not punctuation in a poem, ". . . (pause)," for example, mean volumes? In the economy of expression in a poem, did not all punctuation take the place of unexpressed words? Punctuation was, indeed, of vital importance.

Incidentally, many children made phonograph recordings of their own poems after school, which were used as gifts for Mother's Day, Father's Day, birthdays, or wedding anniversaries. We, also, made phonograph recordings of a class program, entitled "Versecrafters' Varieties," a simulated radio broadcast, for which about two hundred rhyming questions were composed on the subjects of versification, poetry and poets. Shirley Epperson recited her own original poem, "What Is a Ballad?" Ballads were dramatized and sung. On the "Doctor U-2" program (imitative of Dr. I.Q.), biographical questions were in verse form, names and occupations of persons were alliterative (e.g., Percy Primrose, a plumber from Paducah, Pennsylvania), and tongue-twisters were used instead of "thought-twisters" because they expressed exaggerated alliteration.

Our delight knew no bounds when Mrs. Inez Tyler, editor of *Blue Moon* (Washington, D. C.), offered to publish the two prize-winning verses of our first edition in her lovely magazine. Mrs. Tyler was a teacher once and remembers. . . .

In September, I found in my English III classes most of the students whom I had taught in English II. Consequently, I gladly accepted for "extra credit" any poems the students submitted, although versification was no longer in their course of study. Among the units in the curriculum was one of American literature, which stimulated our budding poets into action. If they were too imitative, I overlooked it, for I believed they were bound to go through a period of visible imitation. Through this I hoped they would gradually slip into originality. Are there any writers who have begun by full-fledged originality? Notice how Shelleyan the early Browning is. How Miltonian the early Shelley is. Observe the classical originals of the early Milton, and

I dare say, if you know a sound classical scholar, he can point out to you on which early classical poets the late classical poets founded themselves.

In our second magazine, our Christmas edition, Carol Glennie, who has really become a child-poet, wrote:

Once more we bring you our edition of *Voices, an Adventure in Versecraft*. We are somewhat proud of ourselves, as this is our second time at press. This semester, however, our versecrafters consist of both freshmen and sophomores. Some of us have tried our hearts and hands at poetry before, while for others it is a new and rather surprising experience. Anyhow, we hope the last time wasn't just "beginner's luck" and that you will find even more pleasure in this edition than you did in our spring number. . . ."

Jane Gaddis's poem had me guessing for a few minutes. Read it aloud and its message will be clear:

BY GLORIVIED BISERY

Frob early sprig to lade id fall,
I just dode have doe fud at all,—
The dears stream dowd frob eyes of red,
I sobtibes wish thad I was dead.
By dose id ruds and goes dowhere;
I sdeeze repeatedly. Id ade fair
Who has hayfever through subber's sud!

Dorothy Burns submitted the first sonnet:

REFLECTION

When in despair we look upon this life
And wonder what our mission really means,
We see our fellow-man amid much strife
Still looking for a glimpse of pleasant scenes.
Across the sea a land is laid to waste
Without the seeds of trust to give much hope
To those whose pitiful retreat in haste
Was stopped, and now they are left at last to grope.

So must we witness manifold distress
With hearts that are cold, unshaken by the cries
Of inner love of man that we possess
Quite naturally from birth until life dies?
If modern man could rid himself of hate,
In doing right he would not hesitate.

In Spring, 1947, we had many fine poems from which to choose, contributed by old and new writers. Among the thirty-five poems published were five Elizabethan sonnets, two Petrarchan sonnets, one poem in blank verse, three in free verse,

four lyrics, five cinquains, six short-lined couplets with long titles, and eight limericks. James Couillard's limerick is indicative of high school humor:

A skeptical man was Mark Heater;
He wouldn't believe his gas meter;
He took out a match
And gave it a scratch,—
"Good morning," he said to St. Peter.

Ruth Hering tried her art at "logical" limericks, in which the humorous effect is obtained by following the queer spelling through the rhymes:

"I like to abbreviate oz.,"
Said an odd-minded writer, named Coz.,
"Also, bu. and lb.,
But quite soon I fd.
When I read, the page seemed to boz."

We entered four poems in the Midwestern Writers' contest for high school writers, sponsored by the English Club of Greater Chicago (affiliated with the National Council of Teachers of English). Of the fifteen prizes offered in all types of writing, Calumet High School carried off two prizes in poetry. Carol Glennie's sonnet, "Jeanne and I Get Jobs" (as baby sitters), since published in *Blue Moon*, and Joyce Olson's blank verse, "Four-Dimensional Space," published in *Different* (Rogers, Ark.) appear below:

FOUR-DIMENSIONAL SPACE

The master mind of ages found of late
The mighty law of relativity;
For Einstein now has calculated life
As it would seem to those who make their homes
Beyond the sun and many golden moons,
Beyond the distant jeweled stars of night,
Where only fourth dimension reigns as king.

Picture a world where two dimension rules:
All one would see of life is shaded line,—
People and objects, all would look the same,
Except for differences in length and shade.

Truth holds the same the other way around,
When you behold the fourth dimension plane:
George Washington, in proud, three-cornered hat,
Surely would be puzzled here today,
If scholars told him since his time and deed
Of theories stating strange complexities;
For somewhere out in space beyond his sight,
Invisible to him in this sphere-plane,

Another corner to his hat is found.
If Lincoln, known as stately, tall and spare,
Could see, himself, the fourth dimension plan,
He might discover that we all were wrong
In our opinion of his size and shape.

Einstein, whose mind must comprehend the best
Concerning this odd life of ours on earth,
Might look into a fourth dimension mirror
And find that his long hair was shortened some
Within the realm where walls as thick as trees
Could be passed through without the slightest force,
Where one could take a step in old Shanghai
And find himself in turbulent New York.

If ever there has been a ghost on earth,
I am sure he must have recently arrived
From out of lonely fourth dimension plane.

JEANNE AND I GET JOBS

As children, on the eve of some event
With skipping heart, anticipate the day
Which lies ahead, endeavor to prevent
The certain sleep with thoughts alive and gay,
And think upon things promising and bright,
(For reality is sweetly coated) and
Then, silently, from somewhere in the night,
A fairy takes them off to slumber-land,

So now we stand upon a threshold fair
And large, and from our youthful vantage-place,
We look at life with optimistic air,—
We look not at the din we soon must face,
Nor do we complain, for life could be much worse,—
Have we not our first-earned pay within each purse?

During the summer, upon the suggestion of the students, I typed and sent out to editors many fine poems. From August, 1947, to February, 1948, one hundred and thirty-two poems, written by Calumet freshmen and sophomores, were accepted for publication in national and international magazines, many of which have not yet been published in *Voices, an Adventure in Versecraft*. Since the first and most important task for the beginning writer is establishing his reputation—getting his name before the public as often as possible—we were happy and grateful for these successes. Helene Hughes, a fourteen-year-old poet, had sixteen poems accepted by numerous editors within six months after she began versification. In the Spring, 1948, issue of *The*

Westminster Magazine (Atlanta, Ga.) are printed many comments on her sonnet, "Night," for which she received honorable mention and many reader-votes. Helene will recite her poem, "My Creed," at the coming Spring Music Festival.

For our fourth edition we secured the co-operation of the art classes, who made illustrations of several of the poems and added much enjoyment, interest, and beauty to our magazine. It has been my hope to correlate and secure the co-operation of as many departments as possible. One freshman submitted a poem in Spanish to her language teacher, who edited it and passed it on to me. At present, this poem is in the hands of the editor of *Bohemia* in Havana, Cuba. Ruth Poling, when fourteen, had the honor of having her lyric, "Teen Age Life," set to music by an accomplished composer, Mrs. Adella Altman. Ruth gave a musical reading of her own poem at the P.T.A.'s "Twilight Musical" on April 20, 1947. Several poems on "Peace" and "The Brotherhood of Man" have been on exhibit at the Chicago Public Library. Jane Gaddis's "To an Omoeba" and "By Glorivied Bisery" have been published in *Some of the Best Illinois High School Poetry of 1947* (University of Illinois). Russell Stepan's "Sunset" and Doris Lundgren's "Dilemma" received special honorable mention in *Young America Sings, 1948 Anthology of Great Lakes States High School Poetry* (Los Angeles, Calif.).

Fourteen-year-old Ruth Hering's editorial (Vol. 2, No. 2) carries over verse-teachings in its appeal to the senses of smell, taste, and touch, as well as sound and sight:

Have you ever heard mellow church bells on a snowy morning . . . or seen a child asleep? Do you know the mouth-watering fragrance of a roasting goose? Or the delectable taste of fresh, crisp, salty, buttered popcorn? Have you felt the satin smoothness of a wedding dress or the exciting crispness of your first summer formal? These experiences and a whole world of knowledge and imagination inspire versecrafters.

Some of the freshman and sophomore students at Calumet High School have tried their hearts and hands at the craft of writing verse. Believing that variety is the spice of life, we have tried many different types and forms of poems from lively illogical limricks to complicated, stately sonnets. . . .

Barbara Anderson's parody, with apologies to Joyce Kilmer, illustrates some of our goals in verse-writing:

POEMS

I think that I shall never write
A poem that is far from trite,

A poem with a fresh, new thought,
Mistakes in it, completely naught,
A poem with just every word
Well-chosen and the most preferred;
But, really, now, I do declare
Poems I write are hard to bear!

Our fifth edition contained a parody of Alfred Noyes's "The Highwayman," "The High School Beau," a delightful poem, written and illustrated by Carol Glennie, who hopes to write and illustrate greeting card verses as a hobby. Sixteen-year-old Joyce Olson, having won a scholarship to the Midwestern Writers' Clinic, in which she pursued the writing of poetry with Carol Glennie and me in the advanced class under the delightful direction of Mrs. Jessica Nelson North, is now anxious to take a course in short-story writing this autumn. She hopes to write and illustrate her own stories. She tells me that a young man, who is writing a book on the "Fourth Dimension" at the University of Chicago, has asked her permission to use her poem in it.

In conclusion, I should like to state that any writing of poetry always begins as an experiment. One of the first surprises comes with the discovery that it means more than skillfully and pleasingly stringing rhymes together. The adjustment of language to specific patterns involves equally a subjective adjustment to ideas, to ideals, to life, to the whole order of existence. If the poet makes the poem, not less surely the poem makes the poet, opening an avenue of approach to all truth.

Since I remember my own early growth and incompetence, I, personally, respect the poorest utterance of the humblest "would-be-poet." It is the sincere effort of his heart to express beauty in some form, to reach out for the intangible loveliness of spiritual creation. Every individual is primarily and potentially a poet, so the raw material for recruiting the ranks is inexhaustible. Let every child sing his own small song; let him sing it in his own way. No one needs to worry about our young people; they are lovers of beauty; their ideals are high; they are sane and wholesome. Their thoughts revealed in their writings demonstrate this.

SONNET TO A SUNSET

The sky is beautiful when sunset comes
In fragile pink chiffon, a hue too rare,
With flaming streak of scarlet fire flare
And deeper ruby just like mellow plums.
A vivid saffron suddenly becomes
The palest ivory on the sunlit air;

Then tinged with mauve, a lilac fragment there
With chartreuse is startling as the beat of drums.

The sun, a heavy, burnished copper ball,
Sinks down below the far horizon line;
For earth has nothing that can thus impart
A vision, lifting men to the divine.
Mankind grows unimportant, very small,
Yet nurtures beauty in its humble heart.

BARBARA ANDERSON.
(14 years old)

Surely, we may allow to each and every mortal the pursuit of beauty by whatever road he may choose and in whatever measure he may be able to attain. Should he merely brush the hem of her illusive garment, his life is the more radiant for that luminous touch.

Education for Library Work

Education for library work has recently undergone extensive revision. Degree structure, curriculum organization and course content have all been affected. While the reorganization has been national in scope, the principal activity has been associated with a few of the stronger library schools. The University of Illinois Library School is among these, and its faculty has had a decisive and leading role in establishing the new pattern of library education.

There are many features of the new program which will be of interest to teachers of English, particularly in the provision now made for the training of teacher-librarians.

Accrediting requirements now call for teacher-librarians in even the smallest schools. To qualify for such a position the teacher must have eight hours of library science in at least two courses, one having to do with materials, the other having to do with the organization of the school library. To help teachers satisfy these requirements the University of Illinois Library School offers three courses of three semester hours each, Lib. Sci. 303, *Library Materials for Children*, Lib. Sci. 304, *Library Materials for Adolescents*, and Lib. Sci. 253, *Organization and Operation of the School Library*.

To make it as simple as possible for teachers in the state of Illinois to complete these requirements, these courses are being offered not only at Urbana each semester and in the summer session but are being given by extension throughout the state. Miss Viola

James, formerly librarian at Leyden Community High School, Franklin Park, Illinois, joined the Library School faculty a year ago to devote full time work to the extension program. In addition, several members of the regular faculty are also called upon to offer courses off the campus.

The success of the extension courses this past year has resulted in a decision to enlarge the program considerably, including the addition of one more full item extension teacher. The decision as to the location of the courses is partly dependent upon the demand from a given area. Anyone interested in having the teacher-librarian courses offered in his part of the state should work through the local superintendent of schools, who in turn should address a letter to the Library School requesting such a course.

The two courses in library materials have proven to be very popular courses with teachers generally. Not only do the courses focus attention upon the wide variety of materials now available at the various reading levels but consideration is given to the ways and means of developing good reading habits. There are no prerequisites for these courses, and all teachers are invited to consider them as they are planning their study programs.

The expanding field of school librarianship offers excellent opportunities for creative activity which many find personally stimulating and pleasurable. The school librarian is first of all an expert on what is available in print, and for those who are interested in books and the whole realm of knowledge no more satisfying work can be found. But the preoccupation with books is saved from being sterile by the constant necessity to use one's knowledge of books to advise and guide children during their most formative years. With the increasing participation of the school librarian in the educational process, the double pleasures of teaching and librarianship are joined. For those who are concerned with rewarding, yet pleasant, associations with young people through books and reading, school librarianship is an important field to consider.

To prepare for school librarianship, the student must have, in addition to the education courses necessary for a teacher's certificate, additional professional library training leading to the master's degree in library science. At Illinois this requires one academic year. For college graduates who have had no previous library training, the normal period of time would be one academic year plus one summer session.

Inquiries concerning any of these programs should be addressed to the Assistant Director of the Library School, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

The Constitution of The Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Illinois Association of Teachers of English.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be to organize teachers of English in Illinois for united action in matters of mutual interest, for mutual assistance in improving instruction, and for stimulation of professional research.

Article III. Official Organ

The official organ of the association shall be called the *Illinois English Bulletin*, and it shall be published monthly from October to May inclusive.

Article IV. Officers

SECTION 1. The officers of this organization shall be a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer, a chairman and two members of the program committee, the chairman of the Library English Committee, a general chairman of all committees, and the past presidents.

SECTION 2. The Executive Council shall be composed of the above named officers and the editor of the *Illinois English Bulletin*.

SECTION 3. A nominating committee, appointed by the president at least a month before the fall meeting, will present a slate of officers for election by the Executive Council at the time of the fall meeting.

SECTION 4. Vacancies occurring in any office during the year may be filled by the president.

Article V. Time of Meeting

The Executive Council shall meet preceding the fall meeting and whenever else a meeting shall be called by the president.

Article VI. Amending the Constitution

SECTION 1. This Constitution may be amended at any regular meeting by a two-thirds vote, the proposed amendments having been in the hands of the Executive Council for consideration at least a week before being voted on.

SECTION 2. By-laws may be adopted, amended, or repealed at any regular meeting by a majority vote.

By-laws

Article I. Dues*

SECTION 1. The dues shall be one dollar a year.

SECTION 2. Fifty cents of this shall be payment for a subscription to the *Illinois English Bulletin*.

SECTION 3. Twenty-five cents may be used to carry on work within each Division.

SECTION 4. Twenty-five cents may be used for Research and Executive committee work.

Article II. Duties of the Officers

SECTION 1. The president shall call all meetings and preside at them.

SECTION 2. The vice-president shall appoint and direct the activities of the District Leaders, one person being appointed from each of the I. E. A. Divisions.

SECTION 3. In addition to her usual duties, the secretary shall notify all newly appointed officers of their selection within two weeks after the fall meeting, shall send copies of the minutes of each meeting to all officers and district leaders, shall send to the National Council the names of the new officers, and shall send to the National Council of Teachers of English the credentials of delegates to the National Council convention.

SECTION 4. For two years the retiring president shall remain in the Executive Council to advise and help the new president.

Article III. Standing Committees and Their Duties

SECTION 1. The Research Committee shall carry on studies suggested by the Executive Council.

SECTION 2. The chairman of this committee shall be appointed by the Executive Council, and he shall choose the members of his committee.

SECTION 3. The District Leaders from the I. E. A. Divisions shall form a Central Committee, whose duty shall be to carry into their respective Divisions the work of the Executive Council and the Research Committee and to report to the Executive Council

*This section will shortly be revised as a result of action taken at the last business meeting, October 30, 1948, raising annual dues to two dollars.

at its meetings the needs and desires of teachers throughout the state.

SECTION 4. The District Leaders shall be responsible for organizing within their I. E. A. District a Division Committee, which shall be composed of one representative from each county in the Division.

SECTION 5. Each school shall elect a representative to collect dues within the school. These school leaders act together as a County Committee which meets yearly at the time of County Institute.

SECTION 6. The District Leaders shall also call a meeting of teachers of English within their District at the time of the Division meeting, or at any other more convenient time.

NEWS NOTES

Summer—travel, school, teaching, loafing—what are you going to do? Don't forget to make a note of interesting and unusual experiences to send us in September. Even humdrum activities may lead to change of scene!

Shifts in positions—new school, new rank in old school, retirement, new faces in your departments—any news on these lines?

Mr. Roberts promises us a page or more for "personals" so that we may know what is going on among Illinois English teachers. Please put a note on your calendar for the first day of school reminding you to send us the news—even a post card item!

Send to

MARGARET E. NEWMAN

Elgin High School

Elgin, Illinois

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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RENEW NOW FOR 1949-1950

Date _____

To MRS. ZADA TEMPLETON
421 South Oak Park Avenue
Oak Park, Illinois

I am paying \$2.00 annual membership dues to the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. This also pays for a year's subscription to the Bulletin.

Name _____

Address _____

(Please fill out both cards)

Date _____

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Oak Park, Illinois

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